

Declassified and Approved For Release 2013/07/29 : CIA-RDP78-01617A000800100001-1

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM No. 249

The Communist Threat to Taiwan

15 November 1949

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from FE

1. Summary :

SUBJECT:

The principal military threat to the Nationalist position on Taiwan comes from Communist forces on the mainland. This threat is enhanced by the inherent basic weaknesses of the Nationalist establishment on the island; the same basic weaknesses which contributed so heavily to the Nationalist collapse on the China mainland. The anti-Nationalist feeling among the Taiwanese, while detracting from the ability of the present regime to resist a Communist operation against the island, lacks the leadership, organization, and armed strength necessary to overthrow the Nationalists. Communist infiltration of the island, both among the disaffected native population and Nationalist armed forces, is proceeding, but in itself is probably not strong enough to unseat the Nationalist regime. Although the Communist mainland forces are capable of assaulting Taiwan at any time during the coming winter months, a major Communist effort probably will not occur before March, by which time the Communists are expected to have completed certain preliminary operations such as the capture of the Chushan Islands, the securing, in a military sense, of East China, and the massing of sufficient forces, supplies and transport of the Pukien coast. In the face of such a major Communist assault, compounded by the effects of native disaffection and Communist infiltration, the Nationalist probably could not hold the island.

2. Nationalist Porces on Taiwan

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Nationalist ground forces on Taiwan number well over 100,000 and are supported by an air force of approximately 250 operational aircraft, a navy with about 50 combat ships afloat, and an armored force of over 200 tanks. The navy and air force suffer from shorages of fuel and spare parts, but the ground forces have adequate stocks of weapons and equipment. The weakness of the Nationalists arises from divergence of purpose, lack of will to fight, tendency toward defection, the ineptitude which resulted in their defeats on the mainland, and Communist infiltration.

3. Communist Forces for an Assault on Taiwan

The Communists are committed to taking Taiwan and have already assigned the 400,000-strong force of CHEN Xi to the task. CHEN's forces have had some amphibious experience — but they have not yet faced problems comparable to those involved in an assault upon Taiwan. They have the capability of concentrating and equipping a force of sufficient size to assault the island. The major obstacle to the Communists is the Taiwan Strait, which ranges in width from 75 miles in its northern part to over 200 in the south. The crossing would in all likelohood be made by a junk armada which the Communists are already assembling. These junks, some of which have qualifiery motor power, may be supplemented by elements of the Communist navy, made up of ex-Nationalist ships and men.

4. Weather Conditions

During the coming winter and spring months, weather in the Taiwan Strait, which could be a controlling factor, will not, except for sporadic gales, preclude a crossing. Strong favorable winds continue through the winter.





With spring the velocity of the winds diminishes, and there are recurring periods of low visibility which would facilitate undetected crossings.

5. The Probable Course of the Campaign for Taiwan

During the period of favorable winds, junks under sail power along could cross the strait in about 30 hours. Notorpowered junks and vessels of the Communist navy could cross under cover of darkness and disembark advance elements to establish a beachhead in anticipation of the arrival of the main junk-borne force. Nationalist defenses appear to be organized upon three key, or control, points from which they hope to meet any Communist threat with flexible counteraction. However, the launching of the Communist operation against Taiwan will probably precipitate native uprisings, Communist-inspired sabotage, and Nationalist defections. The cumulative effect of a continuing flow of Communist re-enforcements, the disruptive actions of the native Taiwanese, and the weaknesses inherent in the Nationalist military establishment makes it likely that the Communists can control Taiwan 90 days after the first landing.

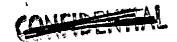


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Project: IM-249

OFFICE OF REPORTS AND ESTIMATES

Project Initiation Memorandum



Date: 7 Nov 49

To: D/FE

Publications

From: fixing party Division, Projects Planning Occ.

Subject: Probable developments in Talwan

Statement of Project

Origin: Interdepartmental Coordinating Staff (Norberg)

Problem To provide a current estimate on probable developments in Tai-Wan

Scope: The request stems from plans to place a USIE unit on Taiwan, and seeks information which would relate to the safety and ability of personnel to carry out functions there. Particular interest is centered on the timing of anticipated events, such as communist attack, internal collapse, etc.

A briof estimate is requested.

Graphics (if any):

Form: Ill memorandum

Draft due in D/St: 15 Nov 49

Dissemination deadline (if any):

Responsible Branch: D/FE

Internal Coordination: None

Departmental responsibilities:

DOCUMENT NO. . NO CHANGE IN CLASS. 🛚 DECLASSIFIED

CLASS, CHANGED TO: TS S C

NEXT REVIEW DATE: DATE HR 70-2

Classification to be no higher then: Secret

Recommended Dissemination: Requester only, plus DCI, IAC

Note that requesters copy should be forwarded there OCD. 749. attached CD No. 7767.1.

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